

## Life on an Australian Island.

A most interesting letter has arrived from one of our Australian members. She lives on an island. How she reached the island, and the birds to be seen there, are excellently described in the message. Her reasons for not enlisting recruits as promised are quite good, and Uncle Toby is looking forward to receiving some signatures from Melbourne. Read, now, the welcome epistle from the Antipodes: Light House Station, Clifty Island,

Victoria, Australia, Jan. 14, [REDACTED]

Dear Uncle Toby,—My friend, Ena Matthew, received the "Weekly Chronicle" in which my letter was published, and she sent it on to me. I was very pleased to see it in the Corner, and I hope I will be able to see this one, too.

You will be wondering why I have not sent in my recruiting paper before this. Well, I have not been able to get one member yet, but you will be able to understand why when I explain. When I last wrote to you we did not know that we were likely to be shifting, but a few weeks after we got notice to move to Clifty Island Light House Station. We left Cape Schanck on July 14, [REDACTED] and landed on Clifty on July 17, after a rough trip of two days on the Government steamer Lady Loch. She called at Dromana (a small seaport on the south-east side of Port Phillip Bay) for us at 2.35 p.m. on July 15. We then went over to Queen's cliff and picked up two families, and then went out of Port Phillip Heads at six o'clock. We sheltered in a bay for one day and two nights, where we saw an engineer do some interesting work on an island, which was lit by a self-attending light.

Two families landed on Wilson's Promontory (the most southerly point in Australia), and our island is about  $19\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-east of it. This is a very poor island indeed, as there is no vegetation on it except for odd patches of pig-face growing on this big rock. There are three families of us, two assistants and their wives, and my father, mother, brother, and myself. So now perhaps you will not wonder why I have not been able to get any members so far.

I received the recruiting papers and interesting little booklet some time after we came here, and I thank you very much, Uncle Toby.

We expect to leave here in a few days, so I will do my best to get some members for the D.B.S. as soon as I reach Melbourne. Not many birds visit here, but more than I expected, considering there are no trees for them to build or perch in. Of course there are sea birds, such as Shags, Molly-hawks, Sea-gulls, and Red-bills. There have been a few Ground-larks here ever since we came, and they have nested and hatched young ones, I am sure, but we cannot find their nests.

Sometimes a few of each, Swallows, White-eyes, Sparrows, Starlings, Fan-tails, and Blue-wren, come to visit us for a short time. I often watch them catch the flies on the wall and I give them crumbs, which they take readily. Mutton-birds are birds which nest in burrows or holes in the ground. It is said that they all nest on November 25. Well, we watched them this year and this is what we noticed. They all came here early in November and made their burrows and then went away, but they did not all come back on the one day, although very many did. They have been about here ever since—that is to say, on and off, because they mostly nest in the three neighbouring islands, where they are not disturbed. They do not make a nest, but just lay their one egg on the floor of their burrow. Father and my brother found several nests and they brought some eggs home to see what they were like, and we found that they were exactly like a duck egg, both out and inside. There are men employed to go and gather them off the islands in Western Port Bay and they are then sold to the factories. The sea was black with mutton birds yesterday morning while they were getting their breakfasts.

Well, Uncle Toby, my letter will be getting too long, so had better say good-bye for this time. Hoping you are well, and I also wish you a very happy New Year, if I am not too late.—I remain, your little niece,

RUBY MEDIC STEVENS.